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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

François Le Coat

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A-ONE #0915 04/13/07

~ Judge Backs Student! ~ People Are Talking! ~ New Thunderbird 2!
~ Opera's New Speed Dial ~ Date-Dissing Suit Out! ~ Atari Bookmarks!

~ Obsolete PC Collection ~ More MS Security Holes ~ Scrapping Internet?
~ XP Sales Time Ending! ~ New Aranym Pack Update ~ New Storm Surges!

-* Beware of IRS Site Confusion *-
-* Check Your E-mail Before Sending It *-
-* Brits Ask ISPs To Take On Cyber-Bullying! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Are you using the same calendar as I am? Does your show that it's April? I thought so. Happy Friday the 13th, by the way! I went out this morning, and it was raw outside! We had rain, sleet, and snow last night! And, Patriot's Day purports to be another stormy day - a Nor'Easter for cryin' out loud!! I was playing golf in March!! The weather around here lately just plain sucks! <grin>

Free speech. Ain't it a grand thing? Since A-ONE can't be considered a crowded movie theater, I can yell "FIRE" if I want to and there's nothing anyone can do about it. What brought that up? Well, as I've probably said a number of times over the years, I usually write my editorial comments the night before each week's issue is released. I hate trying to rush my commentary just a few hours before I release A-ONE each week; I'd prefer spending the short time putting together last-minute articles and making sure everything looks just right. The last thing that I usually read is Joe's column. Well, this week, I put my comments together on Friday - after I got Joe's column and read it. Occasionally when this happens, I have, in the past, made some reference to Joe's comments within my own. But, I have always tried to do so in a manner as to not give away too much. Otherwise, what would be the point of reading Joe's editorials?! <vbg> Well, I am very tempted to add my own opinions based on what Joe wrote this week. And I'm going to do just that, but I will do that at the end of his editorial. He wrote a doozy this week!

But, I will go off on a related tangent beforehand - freedom of speech. I like people who are not afraid to speak their mind. It means more if they can do some in an eloquent fashion, rather than just spouting off in ten different directions at once. I don't know a lot of people who can write this way, and manage to pull it off well. Joe is one of those people who does it well. I do it pretty well, most of the time (he said, patting himself lightly on the back), but not always as fluidly as I'd like. Another person who used to do this well is our long-time friend, Ralph Mariano, of STReport fame (or infamy, depending on your point of view). Both Joe and I worked with Ralph with STReport; and I think we always skipped over everything just to get to Ralph's commentary first. Ralph is one of those guys who isn't afraid to take on any subject matter. Nor is he afraid that he might offend someone. People who worked for Atari, and were responsible for stuff that went wrong - target. If you weren't responsible, but towed the company line even while knowing something was drastically wrong - target. He didn't make a lot of friends for this practice, but he had the cajones to put his neck on the block.

There are a lot of Ralphs in this world. While I don’t always agree with what they have to say, I agree that they have the right to say what they want. There can be consequences, if not careful. The careless remarks are not necessary - there are always better ways to express an opinion and avoid fallout. So, if you follow the news regularly, you may have an idea of what Joe’s editorial may have mentioned. Whether you do or don’t, I would suggest making sure you read it this week.

Until next time...

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Bookmarks for the ATARI Universe

Hi,

The page <http://eureka.atari.org/atari.html> was updated
with bookmarks. If I miss something, just tell me :)

ATARIstically,

-- François LE COAT
Author of Eureka 2.12 (2D Graph Describer, 3D Modeller)
http://eureka.atari.org/

ARAnyM’s Pack Major Update

Hi,

There’s a new binary version of EmuTOS that is available from

<http://atari.sk/download/falcon_os/emutos-512k-0.8.2.zip>

We can read at <http://atari.sk/>

"New version of EmuTOS is released. EmuTOS is a GEMDOS compatible
operating system for Atari ST series computers. It is made from Digital
Research’s GPLed original sources and will be a free and open source
replacement for common TOS images."

It changes a lot in speed and compatibility comparing to all
what was made before it about compatible TOSes. Just testing :-)

I made it available in <http://eureka.atari.org/MacAranym.zip>
a Universal Binary mini pack for OSX that works "out of the box"

And in <http://eureka.atari.org/xa-my-aes.zip> a disk image that
offers a compatible environment for all other ARAnyM host platforms.

I let you comment this major update. Greetings to EmuTOS Team !

Best regards,

-- François LE COAT
Author of Eureka 2.12 (2D Graph Describer, 3D Modeller)
http://eureka.atari.org/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'm going to warn you straight-away. My intro is going to be a long one. You see, I've got a couple of things I want to talk about today. Both of these things have been on my mind for several days now, and I think it's time I burdened you with them. [chuckle]

First off... and probably most importantly... Don Imus. Are you as sick of hearing about this thing as I am?

Let me preface this by saying that I've listened to Imus off and on since the 70's. I remember bunches of things about Imus, like his reading of the call letters of the radio station... "DoubleyouEnnnnnnBeecee". Sometimes, I've been on Imus's 'side', other times not.

I've got several things to say about this whole situation, and the only ones I'm even partially sympathetic toward are the young women of the Rutgers basketball team and their coach. They really do deserve much better than they've gotten, but that's the way life is sometimes, and even this experience will go toward their emotional and intellectual makeup, and it'll be up to them as to whether or not it strengthens their character. I'm betting it does.

Now, Imus gets paid tons of money to be funny, to catch people's attention, and to keep folks like us tuning in. He's as successful as he is exactly because he stirs things up.

Don Imus and I are a little bit alike in that we both try to be funny. The major difference between us is that he succeeds more than fifty percent of the time. I'm not a professional or anything, I just constantly try to get people to think by making things seem so absurd that you HAVE to re-examine them.

I've always kind of thought of being funny on-command was a tough job. It's what I imagine pole-vaulting must be like. You run and make your approach, you plant the pole while you're still on the move and hope you hit the mark you were trying for. You take the jump and, only then, know whether or not things are going the way you wanted them to. Of course, by then, you've committed yourself and there's no going back. If everything is just right, you soar. If not, the best you can hope for is that you don't break your neck when you hit the ground.

Now seriously, I think I know what Imus was going for. Being from

Connecticut, women's' basketball is something I hear about and am subjected to all the time. The UCONN Women's team is consistently one of the top-ranked teams. I myself have made comments about the way the girls (and I don't mean anything sexist or demeaning here. These young women are less than half my age... they're girls) look on the court. They don't look slutty or like derelicts or anything, but they can look... menacing. They're aggressive and very active. The vision of a huffing, sweating, physically active young woman on a basketball court is sort of disconcerting. They can look vicious... sometimes almost feral. Like Venus or Serena Williams doing their thing on the tennis court. They're... well, like men! It's not at all the way I'm accustomed to thinking of young ladies. This is due, no doubt, to my perceptions and preconceptions, but that's the way it is.

When Imus said, "They've got tattoos...", I laughed my butt off. It drew a picture that I could relate to. Just picture Dennis Rodman and Charles Barkley in long hair and women's basketball uniforms. That's what I'm talking about.

Now, when you see these girls when they HAVEN'T been working their magic on the court, they look like any other young women. Some of them quite a bit taller than the average, but not so much that you'd stop and point at them. What you CAN'T see about these girls is that they're among the best at what they do. You and I will probably never EVER be as good at ANYTHING as these young ladies are at what they do... and they're SMART too! And that's a good thing, because while successful players on the men's college basketball teams can hope for multi-million dollar professional contracts, these young women, should they choose to pursue a career in professional sports, can look forward to making... well, enough to live on... maybe. The fame, commercial endorsements and sky-high salaries just don't exist for the women. They're athletes because they love it, not because they think they stand a chance of getting rich down the road.

And, with the Rutgers women, you're looking at a miracle team as well... a group that beat their opponents and the odds right up until the end. They deserve our respect and admiration for what they've achieved. Their coach is also worthy of all the praise we can heap upon her. She has molded and guided these young ladies to what they are today and, truth be told, what they'll be for the rest of their lives.

Okay, back to Don Imus. Imus, ya screwed up, dude.

To his credit, he's said he was wrong and that he's going to apologize to the women in person. Did he only do that because of the pressure that's been brought to bear on him? Maybe. But who cares? What's important is that he does what he needs to do to make it right. And what it's going to take to make it right is up to the young women of the Rutgers team. It's not up to Don Imus, it's not up to corporate sponsors, and it sure as hell isn't up to you and me. For Gawd's sake, let's get them together and get this over with. Nothing good ever comes from putting something like this off.

Oh, and by the way, Imus, SAYING you're not going to whine about the suspension is pretty much the same as whining about it.

Personally, I hope the girls of Rutgers take turns kicking him (either literally or figuratively) until he cries like a little girl. But they won't. Did you see 'the girls' in that press conference? I've never been as impressed with a group of young people as I was with them. They

seem to be a truly class act. I'm not at all surprised by this, just pleased.

Next up, Jesse Jackson. Jesse, shut... your... mouth. With the baggage you're carrying, Rev'nd, I'd try to keep the 'forgiveness' aspect of your religion more in mind. I won't go into a lot of detail here about the baggage, but digging around on the 'net for a very few minutes will turn up some of it.

Next target: Al Sharpton. While Reverend Al, and doubtless many many others consider what Imus said to be a racial slur, I think of it as a stereotypical remark in bad taste. To me, a racial slur is what you used to hear back in the bad old days, right up 'till the late 60's and 70's. I won't give those words of hate and bigotry voice here, but I doubt you'll have much trouble zeroing in on what I'm talking about.

I suppose that what Imus said really IS a racial slur, but I find it hard to believe that he meant it that way. I prefer to believe that he meant it as a generalization... something to draw a picture in our minds.

You have no way of knowing this, but I paused here for about ten minutes, trying to decide if I should repeat the comment he made that is the major point of contention. I'm not going to. It was in poor taste. I have the virtue of time to allow me to think about it. I'll bet Imus wishes he had that little gift.

Anyway, let's get back to Sharpton. Al makes his living by supporting 'his people' when they need a voice. I don't find it to be a particularly pleasing voice, or even a particularly helpful one a lot of the time, but it's his right and perhaps even his calling. I just wish that, if he was going to thump on a bible while he was doing his thing, he'd use one without missing pages. Matthew 7:1, Al. Matthew 7:1.

I guess what disturbs me most about this whole thing is that it's taking our attention away from some very important happenings, both here and around the world. Things that SHOULD have our attention.

UPDATE : UPDATE : UPDATE

I just heard that CBS has fired Don Imus. CBS Chief Executive Officer Les Moonves said that was "much discussion" about the effect that language like that has on people.

Well I'll tell ya what, folks. I think it's time for MORE language and LESS Moonves. LANGUAGE ain't what gives this thing its power, it's telling someone that they should feel like a victim. Each and every one of these women know that they "ain't no ho", and all of us know it. Imus knows it too.

I'm kind of surprised that these corporate drones played the 'propriety' card. Let's face it... these are the Stepford drones that gave us 'King of Queens' and 'How I Met Your Mother'. Do they REALLY want to talk about raising the bar? Really?

Maybe now, since CBS has severed contact with Imus, he'll get a nice fat juicy contract on XM Satellite Radio! Going to satellite radio doesn't mean that Imus would get cut any more slack though.

The main 'feature' of satellite radio is that it's a subscriber service. Therefore, the FCC has very little to say about what's broadcast. Just like HBO and Cinemax can show movies with strong language, nudity and adult situations during primetime without fear of FCC reprisal, satellite radio can air whatever they want to.

But we must realize one thing... The FCC has had NOTHING to say about this whole controversy. No fines have been issued, no reprimands, no nothing. This is not an FCC issue. Therefore, there would probably still have been an uproar had Imus said what he said on satellite radio.

Okay, to paraphrase Forrest Gump: That's about all I have to say about that.

The other thing I wanted to mention was a movie that's recently been released on DVD. It's a British film (if I remember correctly) called Death of a President. It's most startling feature is that its about the assassination of a president. But not just any president. It's about the assassination of George W. Bush... the current President of the United States.

Even though I don't like Bush, when I first heard about this movie, I cringed. It kind of grates on me. Not because of 'Dubya', but because of the institution. The position of President is more than a man. It's part of what makes the U.S. what it is. As I've often said, the beauty of the Presidency is that the system is self-correcting. If you think a president is a bad guy, or misguided, or stupid, or whatever, all you have to do is use your right to vote for someone else. The system will correct itself within four years. Even with trickery and underhandedness, it'll correct itself in no more than eight years. He's a president, not an emperor.

Anyway, I found a copy of this movie and watched it. I must say that I was surprised. It was very well done, and treated the subject with quite a bit of sobriety and decorum. It doesn't advocate assassination, or even give any real opinion on Bush or current policy. It's more a serious look at the Secret Service, the FBI, and people; both those working for the security of the President and our country, and we the citizenry of the United States. This movie is not everyone's cup of tea, to be sure. But I highly recommend watching this movie. Take it for what it's worth.

[Editor's note: I have to admit, I'm not a big fan of Imus. I've listened to him a number of times over the years, but he's not been someone I've enjoyed listening. Maybe I always caught him on "off" days, or the subject matter of the day wasn't of particular interest to me. It's just that Imus wasn't doing it for me. Maybe in the early days of "talk radio" I could enjoy him, but now that talk radio is much more a matter of money than content, I don't enjoy it as much.

Anyway, I agree with Joe - Imus, you did stupid. His comments were stupid and said in a stupid fashion. Racist I don't know. Derogatory? Yeah, I'd say so. He should (and did) apologize. He should (and was) be suspended. Fired? Hard to say. I will say that his sponsors and employers bowed down to pressure. They hired/sponsored Imus and his show because of his controversial persona. Suspension means maintaining your support of the format/persona that you hired him to be, but not supporting the particular issue at hand. Firing him was just caving into pressure.

Had Imus deliberately and maliciously uttered obvious racial remarks, I'd support termination with no qualms about it. However, now they've succeeded in making it possible for someone else to hire him, with the likelihood of an outrageous huge salary. I agree with Joe, the venue is likely to be satellite radio. Just look at what that venue has done for shock jock Howard Stern!

But I also agree with Joe's assessment of Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. They both really need to shut up most of the time. Every time, on the news, when you see a report about some type of racial injustice, one or both of these men is on the scene. We call some lawyers ambulance chasers. These two guys fit the profile - maybe racial injustice chasers? And I'm in no way saying that some, or many, or even all of the events that they become a part of doesn't deserve attention. But does the event require their attention? I'm sure that the fine folks at Rutgers are better qualified to express their contempt of Don Imus, and handle it in their own way. But, that's just my opinion.]

Okay, let's get to the real reason for this column in the first place... The news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Last week, Paul Williamson asked about whether or not an HP InkJet 1200d would work on an Atari. This week he posts:

"I got the printer yesterday, and once I figured out that it didn't like the printer sharing device that I had been using to have two computers connected via the parallel port, it worked straightaway with my Hades.

I can print from Papyrus fine (using MintNet/N_AES) without any need to change any printer drivers etc, and I can also print from Cubase running in single TOS.

The quality is excellent, and the printer is much faster than the HP deskjet 600 which is replaces.

I have been able to connect the other computer via the USB port which this printer also has.

It was not a cheap option as printers go these days, (130 UK pounds) but it is designed to be used by a small business, so I hope it will give several years of service.

Thanks to all for the helpful suggestions while I was choosing which printer to get."

David Wade tells Paul:

"Some HP printers are fine working this way, others get upset. There used to be a document on the web listing which were OK and which were not, but I don't have the link handy or the time to search... I know the BusinessJet 1100's we have at work are OK like this, but I also know we had issues with some older printers....

If its [the 1200d printer] like the 1100 it ships with "standard life"

print heads (not cartridges) which I think are good for about 10,000 sheets. They are not cheap to replace, but on the 1100 you can get an extended life version."

Greg Goodwin jumps in and adds:

"I'm sorry I didn't get into the thread (my CT60 is down, and I don't log on to CSAST as often as I used to). Anyhow, PCL3 was the primary printer language HP used in the 300 dpi days, and selecting a HP 500 or 600 series driver will generally give you PCL3. Laser printers extended the command set through PCL4 and PCL5 before the invention of PCL6, which has nothing whatever to do with PCL1 - 5.

I am glad to glad to hear that a PCL3e printer understands the stock PCL3 generated by the Hades. This makes logical sense, but what is sensible is not always what is true."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli asks about Plain TOS display problems:

"This problem only occurs under plain TOS, on my FalCT60, but I noticed it on my old MegaST-4 with Crazy-Dots. When in high resolutions, 1024x768x256 for instance, the amount of files displayed into an opened directory window differs from the one it really contains.

The problem can be seen (in french only, sorry) here:
http://site.voila.fr/cejiel/Copies_ecran.htm

The 1st screen shows what is displayed under MagiC!, 1024x768, but it has no importance, and, moreover, I opened D: partition instead of E:

The 2nd one is more relevant : it shows that only 20 objects are displayed into C:, while the status bar states there should be 39, and D: displays only 6 objects instead of the 11 stated. If I could increase the resolution, there would be even less objects displayed.

Has anyone else noticed this strange behaviour?"

'Mystic Bytes' tells Jean-Luc:

"wow, this is really funny. It happens probably only at higher resolutions since I use 800x608 for ages on my falcon and no similar behaviour.

Maybe trying Teradesk would be a good idea and if here is ok too, it's definitely bug in TOS.. Btw what TOS version did you use?"

Jean-Luc replies:

"You know what? this is a really sensible suggestion! I'll try it asap! It's TOS 4.04, but it happened too on my MegaST-4, with TOS 2.06 (it was bi-TOS)."

On the subject of the clock chip in a Falcon dying, Derek Mark Edding posts:

"My Falcon has a dead clock, and it has the MK48T87B. I ordered a replacement online and received a Dallas DS12887+. I'm hoping that someone will know enough about these chips to answer a few questions:

1. This is pin-for-pin compatible with the MK48T87B, I hope. Is that right?

2. The MK48T87B has all of its pins. The DS12887 has some gaps, there are a total of six missing pins, some on either side. But if #1 is yes, I'm guessing that these are extra grounds on the MK48T87B. Is this right?

Rather than attempt to desolder the old chip, what I'd like to do is cut the current chip out by using a dremel tool to slice off the tops of the pins close to the chip's plastic. Then I can solder a 24 pin socket on top of the existing pins.

I've heard of this being done before, but I'll need to be very careful to avoid damaging the traces on the motherboard. I believe I can protect the traces by cutting some thin but sturdy material to the right width and sliding it underneath the IC to function as a shield.

Any thoughts on this approach?"

Derryck Croker asks Derek:

"Since you're obviously happy with a soldering iron and such, why not consider taking the top off the NVRAM chip and wiring up a CR2032 coin cell in a holder instead? This has been mentioned in here or in c.s.a.tech many times before."

Derek replies:

"This approach didn't work for me. On advice in another message, I tried prying up the upper half of the MK48T87B.

Unfortunately, I found that the battery and other components were embedded in solid plastic in the upper half. It was filled with a kind of epoxy. Prying it loose pulled its very thin leads out of the lower half of the chip, so there's nothing left to work with.

I'm not sure if this is how they all are or not, but those leads are extremely fine and would have been difficult to solder. I looked at the example image someone had posted, and the interior of my chip doesn't look anything like that. There were no components mounted on the lower half."

Derryck comes back and tells Derek (jeez, there ought to be a law about people with such similar names replying to each other! [grin]):

"Ouch! At least nothing was lost, apart from your time :-/

The NVRAM chip that I witnessed being replaced would have lent itself very well to this approach. Its replacement was sourced as a free

sample from Maxim, I can't recall the actual number any more.

I would probably suggest desoldering the entire chip rather than bodging by cutting through/soldering to the original chip's pins. The risk of metal swarf..."

Greg Goodwin adds his thoughts:

"... You don't need a new clock chip -- your clock chip needs a new battery. If you don't want to desolder, I would strongly consider just wiring in a new battery. Frankly, I if I of little electronics background can accomplish the battery replacement, practically anyone can."

Mark Bedingfield adds his thoughts:

"Personally I would (and will) desolder the IC. I have 2 of them to do this week. Just remove the board and carefully (also quickly) desolder. I am considering putting in a socket, but it will depend on clearance under the keyboard for my stock model. Will probably socket the towered Falcon. Considering the cost of a new Falcon board you might want to take it to a electronics repair shop."

Well folks, that's it for this week. There weren't a lot of messages again this time around, but the 'Imus thing' and the 'movie thing' filled it out and gave us something to think about.

Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 20GB PlayStation 3 Dropped!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" XBox 360 Online Gets IM!
Super Paper Mario!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Shops Drop 20GB PlayStation

The cheaper of Sony Computer Entertainment's two PlayStation 3 consoles is getting harder to find in the U.S.

The 20G-byte version, which costs $500, has been taken off-sale by retailer BestBuy and Sony's own online store displays an error message when the page for the model in question is requested.

But despite its removal from SonyStyle the product hasn't been discontinued, the company said.

"The line-up [at SonyStyle] is decided based on market demand and so it's not surprising that they are not selling it on their Web site but if you go to a retailer you can find it," said Satoshi Fukuoka, a spokesperson for SCEI in Tokyo.

He said the more expensive version with a 60GB hard disk drive has always been more popular among users and that's why some retail outlets aren't stocking the lower-spec model. The second version costs $600 and comes with a wireless Internet adapter not present on the cheaper model.

The 20GB model was launched by Sony in Japan and the U.S. last November. When the PlayStation 3 went on sale in Europe in March this year Sony put only the 60GB model on sale, citing consumer preference for the more expensive version.

A possible new version of the PlayStation 3 was revealed last month in a filing made by Sony to the Federal Communications Commission. In the filing Sony noted a new model with an 80GB hard disk drive.

A spokesperson for Sony declined to comment on the company's plans for future upgrades to the PlayStation 3.

Mario Tough To Resist On Wii

Mario returns to his slimmer self for his Wii debut in Super Paper Mario, a light-hearted adventure filled with more depth than the two-dimension surface suggests.

At first glance, Super Paper Mario appears like your standard side-scroller. Clever gameplay, however, mixed with RPG elements create yet another engaging journey for Nintendo's gaming icon.

The story starts after a new villain, Count Blech, forces Princess Peach and Mario nemesis Bowser to marry. The unlikely union opens a rift threatening to destroy the universe. Mario is then tasked with finding the eight Pure Hearts to destroy this dark energy.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the plot is the humor. It's always poking fun at the franchise yet avoiding that cheese factor that sometimes accompanies gaming's attempts at comedy. Not even Mario and his very thick mustache are spared from funny quips.

The side-scrolling nature and control scheme immediately jarred my fondest memories of Nintendo classic Super Mario Bros Players hold the Wii remote sideways, similarly to the NES controls. Level layouts also share the same characteristics, from warping pipes to blocks branded with question marks.

Super Paper Mario’s cartoonish look is vibrant and colorful, proof that hyper-realistic graphics aren’t necessary to create a visually alluring game. The classic rings of coins collected and Goombas stomped stay true to the Mario spirit.

The normally two-dimensional Paper Mario can flip to 3-D mode, a novel element that enriches the title’s RPG elements. Press the A button, and you switch from side-scroller to a 3-D view, which looks a lot like you’re in a long hallway. The vantage point uncovers hidden foes, items and passageways to help you advance through each level.

Unlike most Mario adventures which leave the hero going solo, your character gets plenty of help. Mario is aided by Pixls, tiny characters that offer you a unique ability. For example, Tippi helps you find hidden items. Point the remote toward the screen like a flashlight to find passages or items. Other Pixls you unlock broaden your range of abilities, from planting bombs to flipping sideways to the point where you’re practically invisible.

As with most RPGs, players lead a party of multiple characters beyond Mario, including Princess Peach and even Bowser. Each brings their own traits which blend nicely into the gameplay. Peach’s umbrella allows her to float in the air for longer jumps, while the fire-breathing Bowser can mow down a horde of foes with one shot.

Gameplay is quite easy to pick up, and flipping between both characters and Pixls is easy. The level of balance between views and the use of all your abilities is impressive, and keeps the action highly entertaining.

As fun and nostalgic as the old-school controls are, the Wii’s motion-sensing should have been used more. Besides pointing to the screen, the only other option is shaking the remote after an attack to add some flair to your moves. One of Wii’s strongest selling points has been the innovative controls, and it’s a shame they’re not more prevalent, especially in tandem with Nintendo’s top character.

Despite the control questions, Super Paper Mario is a robust adventure with rich landscapes and creative gameplay nuances. Whether he’s a go-kart driver, soccer star or 2-D paper cut-out, Mario is still tough to resist.

’God of War II’ Rules On PS2

One of the last video games for the aging PlayStation 2 console turns out to be one of the best.

"God of War II" (Rated M, $49.99) is a thrilling, blood-soaked return to a world of Greek mythology where you’ll battle a host of gods as an angry, blade-flinging anti-hero named Kratos.

The game picks up after the events of the original 2005 "God of War," where Kratos had defeated Ares to become the new - you guessed it - god of war.

His disdain for pretty much everything except the Spartan warriors under his command continues, however, and some decisions early in this sequel return Kratos to mortality and on a long, almost inconceivably violent

quest to defeat none other than Zeus himself.

With his battle-scarred body and red face paint framed around a permanent expression of infinite rage, Kratos is a classic love-to-hate protagonist.

But it’s his abilities in battle, which you’ll control, that make it so much fun.

It’s definitely an action title that turns violence into an art form. Tetris/puzzle-gamers need not apply.

From the very beginning, you’ll have to dispatch towering gods and entire armies as you advance through a variety of ancient cities and ruins.

The battles are epic. Consider the opening sequence against the Colossus of Rhodes, a statue the size of a 20-story building, a good example.

Taking down this living hunk of bronze isn’t as simple as repeatedly whirling Kratos’ powerful, oversized blades. You’ll have to figure out how to launch yourself onto its head and take out an eye for starters.

It’s only a while later that you enter the statue and permanently disable its magical machinations.

As in the first game, the battles with powerful bosses such as the Colossus are one of the most satisfying aspects. They play out as mini-games, where you have to press the correct button at just the right moment to perform dizzying, and often incredibly gory, death maneuvers.

A personal favorite was the aerial battles where you fight gryphons while mounted on the flame-winged Pegasus. At just the right moment I was able to jump from the Pegasus, land on the enemy flyer, chop off its wings, then free-fall back onto my trusty steed.

Ripping out the eyes of a Cyclops, grabbing a soldier and smashing his head on the floor ... clearly this isn’t something for the kiddies.

But after a long day at the office or a frustrating, hourslong schlep through ush hour gridlock, it’s an extremely satisfying way to safely vent any frustrations.

So yes, it’s violent, it’s hardcore and it’s not for everyone. But few games make you feel as godlike as "God of War II."

Four stars out of four.

XBox 360 Online Gets IM

Microsoft Corp. Monday announced Windows Live Messenger instant messaging (IM) software for the XBox 360, in another step towards making the game console a home Internet access device.

Windows Live Messenger for XBox 360 will allow users to interface with other iterations of the communications software for PCs and mobile devices. XBoxes will be updated with the software for free during the XBox 360 Spring Update, on May 7. Xbox users can chat with up to six others at the same time.

XBox owners can use IM using the console's virtual keyboard, or can plug in a USB keyboard. XBox Live already supports voice and video chat, the company said.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Beware of IRS Site Confusion

U.S. taxpayers rushing to meet next Tuesday's tax-filing deadline should be aware of Web sites with URLs similar to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service's IRS.gov site that may charge for services available for free elsewhere, a tech trade group warned.

The CCIA's (Computer & Communications Industry Association's) warning Wednesday comes after warnings from the IRS itself last month. In some cases, other sites with IRS in the domain name may charge money for tax help and services, the CCIA warned.

A consumer survey commissioned by CCIA in December found that 47 percent those surveyed mistakenly believed IRS.com to be the official IRS website before they viewed it, and one-third still thought it was official even after viewing it. CCIA notified the IRS, the FTC, and the U.S. Treasury Department of the alternate IRS sites in January.

CCIA president Ed Black called IRS.com and similar Web sites deceptive. IRS.com has a U.S. flag symbol at the top of its home page, he noted.

"The fundamental business model is relying on deception and mistakes by consumers," he said. "Most people end up there not because they're looking for a private Web site. They're looking for the IRS."

But Kate Sidorovich, spokeswoman for IRS.com owner InterSearch Group, noted that the site includes disclaimers saying it is not affiliated with the IRS.

The site includes links to online tax preparation Web sites that can charge money for their services, but IRS.com itself does not collect money from consumers, she said. Instead, the site collects money through business-to-business referrals, she said.

"The Web sites actually assists people to find online providers of tax services," she said. "We feel we support the IRS efforts."

The owner of IRS.net also disputed CCIA charges that the site is deceptive. Owner Bala Szabo leases IRS.net to a legal tax preparation service that, like other tax services, charges its customers, he said.

Owners of a third Web site mentioned by CCIA, IRS.org, did not immediately

return a phone call seeking comment. But at the top of IRS.org is this notice: "This website is privately operated and is in no way associated with the Internal Revenue Service, which is located at irs.gov."

A CCIA spokesman said some of the sites have made cosmetic changes and posted larger disclaimers since the CCIA first raised its complaints.

Even if the sites aren't collecting money directly from consumers, they're still profiting through deception, Black said. "They're referring people to tax services that are charging people for things they may not have to pay for," he said.

New Storm Surges Through I.T. World

According to the Internet Storm Center, a hurricane-like virus is blowing through the PC world, with at least 20,000 infections on Thursday and thousands more expected. It's a new variant of the notorious Storm worm that's been plaguing I.T. administrators since last year's widespread outbreak.

The new spamming wave of W32/Nuwar@MM, also known as the Storm worm, arrives in a password-protected ZIP file with the password contained in a GIF file in the body of the e-mail, according to Allysa Myers of McAfee Avert Labs. The subject lines read something like, "Worm Alert!" or "Trojan Detected!" The GIF filename may read something like "UrgentNotice.gif" or "AbuseReport.gif." And the ZIP file name may be similar to "patch-####.zip" or "removal-####.zip."

"The tactic for the e-mail is to make you think you've been infected, and that you need to open the ZIP file to run a patch or removal tool to fix your machine," Myers wrote in the McAfee Avert Labs blog. Although the worm does require user interaction to spread itself, security researchers said plenty of users are still falling prey to the strategy and antivirus protection is not enough to keep networks safe.

Ken Dunham, director of the rapid response team at VeriSign iDefense, offered some technical insight into the latest Storm variant. For starters, it includes antisecurity measures to hinder analysis. E-mails are randomized with different filenames, different passwords, and different binaries within the ZIP file - all to evade detection.

"Once executed the worm installs a rootkit on the system (wincom32.sys) and communicates over a private peer-to-peer network to update itself," Dunham said. "It is highly likely that this latest attack will result in many more downloads, pump and dump attacks, and more as seen with former Storm Worm attacks to date."

In essence, the infected computer becomes a zombie machine on a botnet that can be used to send out spam that will launch new attacks. It can also open the door for additional malware to be installed on the victim's system.

Going beyond the plain facts of the resent set of Storm viruses, Johannes Ullrich, chief research officer at the SANS Institute and CTO for the Internet Storm Center, asked I.T. administrators to remember Bagel.

It was just a couple of years ago, he reminded, when a similar set of viruses surged around the Internet. Bagel arrived as a plain executable,

waiting for a gullible user to click and execute it, he wrote in his blog. It later used an encrypted ZIP file, just like the current Storm virus.

Ullrich’s research shows that there is a large overlap in users infected by various Bagel variants. In short, he concluded, the same users are getting infected over and over again by what he called the "malware of the day." "I think these viruses offer a sad glimpse into the current state of Internet security," he said, noting that users still haven’t learned "never to click on an executable" and network administrators still haven’t learned to filter executables.

The latest Storm variant is another hint that antivirus software is no longer an adequate means to protect consumers from current and relevant threats, Ullrich added. McAfee’s advice? If you receive a file you’re not expecting, don’t open it. "Question the sender as to whether they actually sent it, if it appears to come from someone you know," Myers offered in a familiar warming. "If you don’t know the sender, just delete it outright."

Mozilla Thunderbird 2, First Look

If you like Thunderbird 1.5, you’ll love version 2, now available as a near-final release candidate. Like the new Firefox 2, Thunderbird 2 doesn’t introduce any radical changes. But it does introduce inherently useful upgrades that will boost your productivity, particularly if your inbox overflows with e-mail.

The release candidate download is now available from Mozilla’s site. I’ve been using version 2 every day since beta 2’s release in January. Though the program is not yet final, I’ve found it stable and up to the task of handling my daily e-mail chores. Making the switch is easy: Thunderbird 2 maintains all your filters and account settings, and you shouldn’t have any problem jumping right into it. Like previous versions, Thunderbird 2 has a clean and straightforward interface that makes good use of available screen space.

Thunderbird 2’s pop-ups alert you to new incoming e-mail.One of the first things I noticed: mail pop-up alerts, one of Thunderbird’s new features, which list the subject and sender of newly received messages in the lower-right corner of your screen and automatically fade after a few seconds. Each pop-up provides enough information on the latest few unread messages for me to decide whether I need to interrupt what I’m doing to switch to Thunderbird and read the e-mail.

As convenient as the mail pop-ups are, the introduction of tags in Thunderbird 2 is an even bigger boon for organizing messages. Tags replace the previous versions’ labels function, which allowed you to assign just one of a handful of premade labels, such as ’Personal’ or ’ToDo’, to each message. Now, you can create an unlimited number of tags, and you can give any e-mail multiple tags.

Thunderbird 2 lets you easily add custom tags to your messages.Creating on-the-fly tags for any new topic does wonders for managing an ever-growing inbox. For example, I track antivirus news and products, so I created a new tag called ’antivirus’. A right-click lets me assign the new tag to any e-mail, and I can then quickly view only those tagged messages. I found right-clicking faster and cleaner than the typical method of creating a new folder for all such messages and then manually

adding those messages to the folder. The feature is also particularly useful when combined with saved-search folders that show all messages with a particular tag (but keep your e-mail in one inbox). In the release candidate, however, the new tags have a few rough edges. For example, I changed the name of the default ’Personal’ tag to ’PCW’, but a filter I migrated from Thunderbird 1.5 still assigns ’Personal’ to many messages. Also, when I assign multiple tags, Thunderbird seems to randomly select which tag’s color it will use for the message; it doesn’t allow me to designate a dominant color.

Brand-new in this release candidate is a Gmail account preset that fills in almost everything (server name, etc.) automatically when you configure Thunderbird to read your Gmail messages. You need only provide your name (for display) and account. The default settings will leave the messages on Gmail’s servers so you can read them through both Thunderbird and Gmail.

The release notes list the same functionality for a.Mac account, but (not surprisingly) I didn’t see such an option in my Windows version; it may show up only in the Mac software.

Other notable tweaks to Thunderbird include better customization options for viewing folders, and find-as-you-type searches. See the release notes for a full list of changes.

Unfortunately, Mozilla doesn’t seem to have significantly improved its junk-mail filters, and my inbox still has plenty of spam. Also, Thunderbird still lacks a built-in calendar; however, a terrific and easy-to-use add-on called ReminderFox adds some basic calendaring functions, such as reminders to revisit a particular e-mail by a certain time.

Though Thunderbird 2 is not yet a final release, I found that the release candidate’s new features and overall stability more than warrant your making it your primary mail client.

Mozilla Thunderbird 2 Release CandidatePCW Rating: PendingStability, clean looks, and a high degree of customization make the beta of Thunderbird 2 a winner.Freewww.mozilla.com

Web Browser Shows Glance of 9 Favorites

Forget the bookmarks.

The latest version of Opera’s Web browser lets visitors see mini versions of their nine favorite sites at a glance. Click on any thumbnail to load the full site.

The Speed Dial feature also lets people access the site by typing its corresponding numeral 1 to 9 in the address bar.

"Speed Dial is a fresh way to call up the top sites you enjoy throughout the day," Jon von Tetzchner, chief executive of Opera Software ASA, said in a statement. "It’s a cool, new way to access those sites."

Users still have the option of typing in the entire Web address or calling up the site using a traditional bookmark.

The feature, available in the 9.2 version of the Opera browser released Wednesday, represents the Norwegian software maker's latest attempt to distinguish itself from more popular rivals like Microsoft Corp.'s Internet Explorer and Mozilla's Firefox.

Opera's free software is available for the Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems.

Microsoft Warns of 4 "Critical" Security Holes

Microsoft Corp. warned of four security flaws in its software that it categorized as "critical" on Tuesday that could allow attackers to gain control of a user's computer.

Microsoft, whose Windows operating system runs some 95 percent of the world's computers, issued the patches as part of its monthly security bulletin.

The world's biggest software maker defines a flaw as "critical" when it could allow a damaging Internet worm to replicate without the user's doing anything to the machine.

The company said the "critical" patches fixed three holes in its Windows operating system and another in its Content Management Server product. Microsoft also issued another security update for Windows it rated at the lower threat level of "important."

The fixes come a little more than a week after it released a patch outside of the regular monthly update to plug a security hole related to an animated cursor that hackers had used to launch attacks after users clicked on links to malicious Web sites.

The company has been working to improve the security and reliability of its software as more and more malicious software target weaknesses in Windows and other Microsoft software.

The latest patches can be downloaded at www.microsoft.com/security.

British Goverment Wants Internet Providers To Combat Cyber-Bullying

The British government said Tuesday it will urge Internet providers to block or remove mobile telephone videos showing pupils or teachers being bullied.

Education Secretary Alan Johnson will give a speech later Tuesday in Belfast telling Internet companies that "they have a social responsibility and moral obligation to act," his ministry said.

A British teachers' union praised the decision after having pressed the government to protect members against pupils taking inappropriate videos of them with their mobile telephone cameras and posting them on the Internet.

Johnson will also tell teachers that they will have more powers to discipline pupils and confiscate mobile phones and other devices from anyone using them to disrupt lessons.

Johnson will announce his two-pronged approach during a speech to the annual conference of The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), Britain’s largest teaching union.

"These are big companies we are talking about: they have a social responsibility and moral obligation to act," Johnson will say according to extracts of his speech released by the education ministry.

"Without the online approval which appeals to the innate insecurities of the bully, such sinister activities would have much less attraction," Johnson will say.

"I am therefore calling on the providers of these sites to take firmer action to block or remove offensive school videos, in the same way that they have commendably cut pornographic content," according to the speech.

"By removing the platform, we’ll blunt the appeal."

Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) union, praised the "quick response" to demands at its conference last week for the government to take "all reasonable steps" to stop the growing problem of cyber-bullying.

ATL delegates heard how pupils had used mobile phones to try taking pictures up teachers’ skirts. They also heard that some teachers had their trousers pulled down in class as students filmed the incident on their phones.

Check Your E-mail - Before You Hit Send

When you’re interviewing two authors who’ve written a guide on email, the temptation is to do it via email.

But among the suggestions in Send: The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home (Knopf, $19.95, out Tuesday) is, "Don’t forget to show up sometimes."

EXCERPT: Find out what you should be sending

As David Shipley and Will Schwalbe write, "Technology was meant to facilitate personal communication - not to do away with it."

So the interview is done in person, at a Manhattan restaurant, which, as Shipley notes, "also means you get to eat lunch."

Two years ago, at a non-working lunch, Shipley, 44, deputy editorial page editor of The New York Times, and Schwalbe, 45, editor in chief of Hyperion Books, who are longtime friends, started gripping about email, including miscues they had made themselves.

Lunch led to a proposal for a "survival guide for the digital age." As Shipley puts it, "You know the saying, ’You write the book you need.’ We

needed this."

They’re not anti-email: "We don’t hate email," they write. "We recognize that email has changed our lives in countless good ways. We just want to do it better."

The problem, Schwalbe says, is that email spread so fast: "It’s like one day it didn’t exist, then suddenly we’re getting 200 to 300 emails a day. No one told us how to use it or not use it." They cite its lack of tone and speed, "which doesn’t just make it easier to lose our cool - it actually eggs us on."

The 247-page book advises "Never forward anything without permission, and assume everything you write will be forwarded," and "Never forget a Cc has the power to publicly shame someone, whether that’s your intention or not."

Its authors see the book as more than email etiquette: "It’s more important than that when a bad email can cost you your job or bring down a company," Shipley says.

A chapter on "The Email That Can Land You in Jail" includes an example from an employee at A.H. Robins about a recalled diet medication: "Do I have to look forward to spending my waning years writing checks to fat people worried about a silly lung problem?"

But Shipley and Schwalbe are more concerned with small, everyday email annoyances. As they wrote the book, mostly together, taking turns at the keyboard, "it grew from a book about email to a book about being mindful, about how to behave," Schwalbe says.

They say one thing everyone wants, but no one has invented, is a "panic button," a short delay after hitting send, like the kind TV networks use to bleep obscenities.

As for their best advice, the authors quote from their book:

"Think before you send," says Shipley.

"Send email you would like to receive," says Schwalbe.

They’ve also set up a website to collect "bad emails," at Thinkbeforeyousend.com.

Court Reverses Penalty Over MySpace Post

A judge violated a juvenile’s free-speech rights when he placed her on probation for posting an expletive-laden entry on MySpace criticizing a school principal, the Indiana Court of Appeals ruled.

The three-judge panel on Monday ordered the Putnam Circuit Court to set aside its penalty against the girl, referred to only as A.B. in court records.

"While we have little regard for A.B.’s use of vulgar epithets, we conclude that her overall message constitutes political speech," Judge Patricia Riley wrote in the 10-page opinion.

In February 2006, Greencastle Middle School Principal Shawn Gobert discovered a Web page on MySpace purportedly created by him. A.B., who did not create the page, made derogatory postings on it concerning the school's policy on body piercings.

The state filed a delinquency petition in March alleging that A.B.'s acts would have been harassment, identity deception and identity theft if committed by an adult. The juvenile court dropped most of the charges but in June found A.B. to be a delinquent child and placed her on nine months of probation. The judge ruled the comments were obscene.

A.B. appealed, arguing that her comments were protected political speech under both the state and federal constitutions because they dealt with school policy.

The Court of Appeals found that the comments were protected and that the juvenile court had unconstitutionally restricted her right of free expression.

There was no number for Shawn Gobert in publishing phone listings. The Associated Press left a message seeking comment Monday at Greencastle Middle School.

Time is Running Out for Windows XP

Microsoft will force PC makers to stop selling machines running XP by the end of this year, despite ongoing compatibility problems and demand for XP from users.

Demand for XP is particularly strong among small and medium-sized businesses, according to Dell, which announced it will continue offering some machines with XP pre-installed.

However, the clock is ticking, and Dell and other PC makers will be obliged to stop selling machines running XP by the end of the year, despite ongoing compatibility and performance issues with Windows Vista.

Dell has decided to continue offering XP on business systems through the summer through a feature called "Customize with Windows XP," the company said in a recent blog post.

Dell said the move reflects strong demand for XP machines, especially for smaller businesses, which often buy systems in small numbers from OEMs.

"Dell recognizes the needs of small business customers and understands that more time is needed to transition to a new operating system," said Tom West, director of small business marketing at Dell, on the company's blog. "The plan is to continue offering Windows XP on select Dimension and Inspiron systems until later this summer."

Dell isn't planning to offer XP on consumer systems, saying they prefer the "latest and greatest," a situation that displeased some customers. "Thumbs down for not offering this to home users," wrote one user.

"Many home users- especially gamers - do consider XP the 'greatest' - especially after all the media articles and benchmarks showing very poor

gaming performance and compatibility on Vista," wrote another.

At the end of this year, however, Microsoft OEMs' contracts will no longer give them the option of selling XP-powered machines. This is despite problems that have surfaced for consumers as well as businesses, such as games and application incompatibility and driver problems.

Most recently, users complained that Vista's start-up, shut-down and application load times are far too long compared with Windows XP. Users on Microsoft's Performance & Maintenance forum, who sound pro-Vista for the most part, have vented about a variety of speed issues.

"I have XP and Vista running side-by-side [but] I twiddle my thumbs waiting for certain apps to load up on the Vista machine while the load is instantaneous on the older XP machine," wrote a user identified as William. "I've tweaked it as best as I could with the info available and I am still very disappointed."

Doubts have also been raised about Vista's security, after it emerged that Vista was affected by recent widespread hacks involving Windows' animated cursors, even though that portion of the code was addressed by an update more than two years ago.

Judge Tosses Date-Dissing Web Suit

A Florida-based Web site that invites women to warn others about men they've dated cannot be sued in a Pennsylvania court by an attorney who said its postings falsely claimed he was unfaithful and had sexually transmitted diseases.

Allegheny County Common Pleas Judge R. Stanton Wettick Jr. said he had no jurisdiction over the lawsuit Todd Hollis filed last June against DontDateHimGirl.com and its creator, Tasha C. Cunningham, 34, of Miami.

Hollis, of Pittsburgh, claimed Cunningham's site is liable because it solicits negative comments but does not screen them for truthfulness. Hollis also is suing those who posted comments that questioned his sexuality and claimed he tried to dodge paying child support.

Cunningham and her attorneys say a 1996 federal law shields Web sites from such lawsuits when they merely transmit user postings.

Wettick did not address that issue and ruled simply that Pennsylvania's court system has no jurisdiction over a Florida Web site, even though Pennsylvanians post messages on it.

The ruling, issued last week, does not address Hollis' still-pending claims against women who posted the messages. One of the women has denied making any posts. Another acknowledged posting comments but denied damaging his reputation.

Hollis said he has not decided whether to sue the Web site again in another venue.

Cunningham's date-dissing site has tripled in size since the lawsuit was filed, with 27,000 profiles that she markets as "a new cost-effective weapon in the war on cheating men." Cunningham works full-time on the

site and is developing others, including a Spanish-language version that will launch in June.

Researchers Explore Scrapping Internet

Although it has already taken nearly four decades to get this far in building the Internet, some university researchers with the federal government’s blessing want to scrap all that and start over.

The idea may seem unthinkable, even absurd, but many believe a "clean slate" approach is the only way to truly address security, mobility and other challenges that have cropped up since UCLA professor Leonard Kleinrock helped supervise the first exchange of meaningless test data between two machines on Sept. 2, 1969.

The Internet "works well in many situations but was designed for completely different assumptions," said Dipankar Raychaudhuri, a Rutgers University professor overseeing three clean-slate projects. "It’s sort of a miracle that it continues to work well today."

No longer constrained by slow connections and computer processors and high costs for storage, researchers say the time has come to rethink the Internet’s underlying architecture, a move that could mean replacing networking equipment and rewriting software on computers to better channel future traffic over the existing pipes.

Even Vinton Cerf, one of the Internet’s founding fathers as co-developer of the key communications techniques, said the exercise was "generally healthy" because the current technology "does not satisfy all needs."

One challenge in any reconstruction, though, will be balancing the interests of various constituencies. The first time around, researchers were able to toil away in their labs quietly. Industry is playing a bigger role this time, and law enforcement is bound to make its needs for wiretapping known.

There’s no evidence they are meddling yet, but once any research looks promising, "a number of people (will) want to be in the drawing room," said Jonathan Zittrain, a law professor affiliated with Oxford and Harvard universities. "They’ll be wearing coats and ties and spilling out of the venue."

The National Science Foundation wants to build an experimental research network known as the Global Environment for Network Innovations, or GENI, and is funding several projects at universities and elsewhere through Future Internet Network Design, or FIND.

Rutgers, Stanford, Princeton, Carnegie Mellon and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are among the universities pursuing individual projects. Other government agencies, including the Defense Department, have also been exploring the concept.

The European Union has also backed research on such initiatives, through a program known as Future Internet Research and Experimentation, or FIRE. Government officials and researchers met last month in Zurich to discuss early findings and goals.

A new network could run parallel with the current Internet and eventually replace it, or perhaps aspects of the research could go into a major overhaul of the existing architecture.

These clean-slate efforts are still in their early stages, though, and aren't expected to bear fruit for another 10 or 15 years - assuming Congress comes through with funding.

Guru Parulkar, who will become executive director of Stanford's initiative after heading NSF's clean-slate programs, estimated that GENI alone could cost $350 million, while government, university and industry spending on the individual projects could collectively reach $300 million. Spending so far has been in the tens of millions of dollars.

And it could take billions of dollars to replace all the software and hardware deep in the legacy systems.

Clean-slate advocates say the cozy world of researchers in the 1970s and 1980s doesn't necessarily mesh with the realities and needs of the commercial Internet.

"The network is now mission critical for too many people, when in the (early days) it was just experimental," Zittrain said.

The Internet's early architects built the system on the principle of trust. Researchers largely knew one another, so they kept the shared network open and flexible - qualities that proved key to its rapid growth.

But spammers and hackers arrived as the network expanded and could roam freely because the Internet doesn't have built-in mechanisms for knowing with certainty who sent what.

The network's designers also assumed that computers are in fixed locations and always connected. That's no longer the case with the proliferation of laptops, personal digital assistants and other mobile devices, all hopping from one wireless access point to another, losing their signals here and there.

Engineers tacked on improvements to support mobility and improved security, but researchers say all that adds complexity, reduces performance and, in the case of security, amounts at most to bandages in a high-stakes game of cat and mouse.

Workarounds for mobile devices "can work quite well if a small fraction of the traffic is of that type," but could overwhelm computer processors and create security holes when 90 percent or more of the traffic is mobile, said Nick McKeown, co-director of Stanford's clean-slate program.

The Internet will continue to face new challenges as applications require guaranteed transmissions - not the "best effort" approach that works better for e-mail and other tasks with less time sensitivity.

Think of a doctor using teleconferencing to perform a surgery remotely, or a customer of an Internet-based phone service needing to make an emergency call. In such cases, even small delays in relaying data can be deadly.

And one day, sensors of all sorts will likely be Internet capable.

Rather than create workarounds each time, clean-slate researchers want to redesign the system to easily accommodate any future technologies, said

Larry Peterson, chairman of computer science at Princeton and head of the planning group for the NSF's GENI.

Even if the original designers had the benefit of hindsight, they might not have been able to incorporate these features from the get-go. Computers, for instance, were much slower then, possibly too weak for the computations needed for robust authentication.

"We made decisions based on a very different technical landscape," said Bruce Davie, a fellow with network-equipment maker Cisco Systems Inc., which stands to gain from selling new products and incorporating research findings into its existing line.

"Now, we have the ability to do all sorts of things at very high speeds," he said. "Why don't we start thinking about how we take advantage of those things and not be constrained by the current legacy we have?"

Of course, a key question is how to make any transition - and researchers are largely punting for now.

"Let's try to define where we think we should end up, what we think the Internet should look like in 15 years' time, and only then would we decide the path," McKeown said. "We acknowledge it's going to be really hard but I think it will be a mistake to be deterred by that."

Kleinrock, the Internet pioneer at UCLA, questioned the need for a transition at all, but said such efforts are useful for their out-of-the-box thinking.

"A thing called GENI will almost surely not become the Internet, but pieces of it might fold into the Internet as it advances," he said.

Think evolution, not revolution.

Princeton already runs a smaller experimental network called PlanetLab, while Carnegie Mellon has a clean-slate project called 100 x 100.

These days, Carnegie Mellon professor Hui Zhang said he no longer feels like "the outcast of the community" as a champion of clean-slate designs.

Construction on GENI could start by 2010 and take about five years to complete. Once operational, it should have a decade-long lifespan.

FIND, meanwhile, funded about two dozen projects last year and is evaluating a second round of grants for research that could ultimately be tested on GENI.

These go beyond projects like Internet2 and National LambdaRail, both of which focus on next-generation needs for speed.

Any redesign may incorporate mechanisms, known as virtualization, for multiple networks to operate over the same pipes, making further transitions much easier. Also possible are new structures for data packets and a replacement of Cerf's TCP/IP communications protocols.

"Almost every assumption going into the current design of the Internet is open to reconsideration and challenge," said Parulkar, the NSF official heading to Stanford. "Researchers may come up with wild ideas and very innovative ideas that may not have a lot to do with the current Internet."

History - And Money - In Obsolete Computers

In the first purchase of his collection, Sellam Ismail loaded the trunk of his car with old computers he stumbled upon at a flea market for $5 apiece. Soon he had filled his three-car garage with what others would consider obsolete junk.

Years later, his collection of early computers, printers, and related parts is piled high across shelves and in chaotic heaps in a 4,500-square-foot warehouse near Silicon Valley. And it is worth real money.

Even as the power and speed of today’s computers make their forerunners look ever punier, a growing band of collectors are gathering retro computers, considering them important relics and even good investments.

"There has been a real steep upward trend in prices in the last year, year and a half," said Ismail, 38. "It seems it’s become like the new collectible to moneyed people. Before it was just nerds and hobbyists."

He states his own affiliation clearly: he wears a black T shirt with the word "nerd" on the front. He recently brought a quarter-century old Xerox Star computer back to life to be used as evidence in a patent lawsuit.

The pride of his collection is an Apple Lisa, one of the first computers (introduced in 1983) with a now standard graphical interface. Such items sell for more than $10,000.

In an old barn in Northern California that also houses pigs, Bruce Damer, 45, keeps a collection that includes a Cray 1 supercomputer, a Xerox Alto (an early microcomputer introduced in 1973) and early Apple prototypes.

"For me the fascination with these artifacts are that they are living histories - especially if they can be kept running - and that they are the key innovations that affect all of our lives more than anything else here in the 21st Century," Damer said.

"These artifacts also represent the ’roads not taken’ when you see designs and user interfaces that in some ways are better than we have now, but simply didn’t make it."

Damer’s "Digibarn" is open to the public by appointment.

"I think my wife can be a bit put off by the project if we get visitors who want to come on the weekends but she is remarkably tolerant of this hobby of mine," said Damer, who is the owner of a company that produces 3D simulations for the U.S. space agency, NASA.

New Jersey-based Evan Koblentz says acquiring old computers is much like some other hobbies.

"Antique car collecting is a great analogy," he said. "No one is saying that a ’34 Ford is better than a 2004 Ford in terms of reliable technology, but it’s funner."

"Vintage computers have character. Once the whole Wintel thing came along, all computers pretty much look alike," he said of newer computers

that run Windows software on Intel Corp. processors.

"In vintage computers, just because you bought one and plugged it in didn’t mean it would work, didn’t mean the software was available."

As in other hobbies, tech enthusiasts scour Internet sites and eBay for offerings, attend swap meets (where the old machines are sometimes demonstrated) and rely on word of mouth to obtain rare finds. Some items cost just a few dollars; jewels go for thousands of dollars.

Private demand is also making it more difficult for museums to obtain certain models. "It’s tough; now they are becoming much more valuable," said John Toole, executive director of the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California.

Some celebrate their collections on detailed Internet sites, such as Silicon Valley software engineer Erik Klein, 41, at http://www.vintage-computer.com.

"I’ve tried collecting stamps and coins and never quite got into it mainly because, for me, you can’t really ’feel’ the history in the items," he said.

The pride of his collection is a 1971 Kenbak-1 computing machine that he
bought for $2,500 a few years ago. He says it has since appreciated five fold.

In Livermore, Ismail says his vast holdings of more than 2,000 computers, thousands of books, monitors and countless electronic odds and ends is worth more than $500,000. But he emphasizes that the real value is historical not financial, and hopes to one day convert his disorganized warehouse into a museum.

"Historically there is a lot of stuff that is significant in here," Ismail said. "People are going to understand why I did this."

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